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Professors school USS Boxer on regional security

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USS Boxer

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130829-N-MK881-001 PACIFIC OCEAN (Aug. 28, 2013) Professor Tristan James Mabry Ph.D., Department of National Security Affairs at the Naval Postgraduate School, lectures about China's military modernization aboard the amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4). Boxer is underway for a regularly scheduled deployment as part of the Boxer Amphibious Ready Group (BOXARG). (U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joe Bishop/Released)

Professors School USS Boxer on Regional Security

By Mass Communication Specialist 3rd Class Joe Bishop, Boxer Amphibious Ready Group Public Affairs

USS BOXER, At Sea - A small team of professors from Naval Postgraduate School in Monterrey, Calif. came aboard the deployed amphibious assault ship USS Boxer (LHD 4) to train the crew with their Regional Security Education Program (RSEP) from Aug. 25th to Aug. 29th.

After the October 2000 USS Cole attack, the former Chief of Naval Operations Adm. Vern Clark initiated the program to educate Sailors on pertinent cultural facts and social structures that they may encounter during deployment. Sailors receive graduate-level lectures from subject-matter experts on regional conflicts occurring within Boxer's area of operation.

The program was established to help educate ship leaders so they are better prepared to confront multiple security challenges while at sea.

"There was a DoD [Department of Defense] investigation that looked into some of the factors that went into al-Qaida's successful attack against USS Cole," said Navy Postgraduate School Professor Mark Huber. "RSEP was brought to life in the aftermath of the attack."

The visiting professors spent five days presenting lectures to dozens of Sailors and Marines.

"The primary audience is the senior leadership, the strike group admiral, the commodore for the ARG [Amphibious Ready Group], and his or her staff, generally E-7 and above," said Huber, a retired Navy helicopter pilot. "But because we also have regional experts onboard, they are able to provide cultural awareness to all hands."

The enlisted personnel who were present during the lectures appreciated the opportunity to learn about cultures and people they may come into contact with during deployment.

"I was really excited to find out professors from the Naval Postgraduate School were coming onboard to give Marines and Sailors presentations about different countries in the region we'll be near during deployment," said Sgt. Jennifer Pirante, a combat correspondent assigned to the 13th Marine Expeditionary Unit. "These lectures helped improve my cultural awareness, not just about our current relationship to other countries, but the current situation in those countries."

Mr. Huber believes Sailors are highly competent in their respective rates and areas of specialty, but these competencies alone are not always sufficient. There is a need to supplement Sailors' knowledge with information about the people they will be dealing with and the places they will be working in.

"The primary goal is to enable better-informed decision-making," said Huber. "Not everyone brings regional expertise to his or her job. Here on this ship you have to have a lot of other competencies and skill sets; but we need to marry that up with some foundational regional knowledge in order to make good decisions in context."

The professors with RSEP aim to instill cultural awareness needed to preserve good relations with longtime friendly regions, as well as provide a basic foundation for Sailors to be educated, international travelers.

"Our international partners matter, and to have a strong relationship with our partners we need this Amphibious Ready Group to arrive on scene with an understanding of what those challenges are, and to be well informed," said Huber.

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